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Mr. Ben H. Bagdikian
The Washington Post
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. Bagdikian:

Thank you for your letter of the 29th, and the copy of your story on the stolen FBI documents.

I would be pleased to have the opportunity to discuss these matters with any of your reporters. If you want to call me, phone (415)-845-4669, station to station. There are several knowledgeable students of the Warren Report in the Washington area whom you might also want to contact:

Bud Fensterwald (Committee to Investigate Assassinations), 927 15th St.
NW, Washington 20005; (202)-347-3837
Harold Weisberg (Route 8, Frederick, Maryland 21701)

I was a little surprised by the report that appeared March 26, about the letter from the Idaho scoutmaster to the Soviet Embassy that was in the stolen FBI files. I thought everyone assumed that the FBI routinely reads all the Soviet Embassy's mail. Just four days before the Kennedy assassination, the FBI learned the contents of a letter Lee Harvey Oswald had written to the Embassy about the trip he had just completed to Mexico (Commission Exhibit 15). From CE 834, a list of the contents of the FBI's headquarters file on Oswald:

"(Item) 69. An airtel from the Washington Field Office to this Bureau dated November 19, 1963, reporting that an informant advised on November 18, 1963, that Lee Harvey Oswald had been in contact with the Soviet Embassy, Mexico City, Mexico."

A question which the Commission asked the FBI confirms that this information came directly from the letter: (CE 833, # 28)

"What was the FBI evaluation of confidential information received on November 18, 1963 regarding Oswald's letter to the Soviet Embassy in Washington?"

I don't know for sure whether the FBI got this information from a source in the Embassy or from a mail cover. (Allen & Scott, who have good sources but are very unreliable in details, said that the letter was intercepted and photographed.)

This kind of interception is common in the Oswald case. I am working on a detailed memo; the following is a summary of my observations:

(1) In 1960, Oswald's mother initiated an investigation by sending a money order to her son in Russia (CE 821). (This may have involved either mail interception or notification of the FBI by the bank involved.)

(2) A 1962 reinterview of Oswald may have resulted from his contact with the Soviet Embassy to inform them of his wife's address. (CE 824)

(3) An April 1963 letter from Oswald to the Fair Play for Cuba Committee was apparently given to the FBI by an informant in that group (CE 829; CE 833, # 8).

(4) A June 1963 letter to the Worker was photographed and cut in the FBI files, along with the original of a change of address card.

(5) A letter to the FPCO in June or July 1963 was apparently also photographed for the FBI, in late October 1963.

My main interest in such things is not the fact of the interceptions, but the action taken by the FBI as a result. The New Orleans FBI office seems to have consistently ignored leads about the existence of an FPCO office in that city.

One such lead was provided by item (5) above; an earlier one was a pamphlet which Oswald himself gave to the FBI, which had the stamped notation "FPCC / 544 Camp Street / New Orleans, La." As you may know, that was the address of a detective agency run by a former FBI man with extensive right-wing ties. This lack of action by the FBI is inconsistent with the absence of some "special relationship" with Oswald.

Another interesting point is the degree to which these matters are concealed in the Report and files of the Commission. I obtained the pamphlet in question after extended correspondence, using the Freedom of Information Act; it had not even been given to the Commission. I am now exhausting my administrative remedies in a couple of similar requests, including one for an FBI field office file relating to Oswald that the Commission apparently never got interested in.

On another topic: your story of March 24 indicated that the Justice Department declined to tell you what "PSI" and "SI" stand for. It is my understanding that "(P)SI" means "(potential) security informant." (That is what Oswald may well have been.) This is opposed to "PCI" and "CI", which refer to "criminal informants." (Jack Ruby was probably a PCI, although the FBI didn't exactly volunteer this information to the Commission. The FBI said that although Ruby was contacted nine times in 1959 "in view of his position as a night club operator who might have knowledge of the criminal element in Dallas," he furnished no information, was not paid, and (therefore?) was never an informant. A questionable story, but the Commission discreetly did not mention it in the Report.

Sincerely yours,

Paul L. Hoch
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